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THE PROBLEM OF LITERARY LANGUAGE AND DIALECT IN ARAB COUNTRIES. PRELIMINARY TRANSLATIONS OF SELECTED WORKS IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS, NUMBER II.

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The author notes the problems arising from the dichotomy between literary Arabic and the spoken varieties. The thousand-year-old system of teaching literary Arabic, the archaic elements of grammar, and the writing system are discussed. The written history of the literary language is presented in three stages--(1) the pre-Islamic classical, (2) the international medieval Eastern, and (3) the contemporary. A speaker of one of the five main dialects (Abrabian, Syrian, Iraqi, Egyptian, or Maghribi) can, with difficulty, understand a conversation in another dialect becuase of the similarity in vocabulary and basic grammar. The almost complete elimination of the literary language from the area of oral communication, however, and the almost unlimited domination of this area by the dialects has provoked a natural desire to find some way for a unification of these two language forms, sometimes considered antagonistic in their "bilingualism." A general opinion is that the solution depends on time and that the rift between written and spoken forms will narrow with the disappearance of illiteracy. This study, translated by Kathleen Lewis and edited for content by Frank A. Rice of the Center for Applied Linguistics, originally appeared in "Voprosy formiroanija i razvitija nacional'nyx jazykov (Problems of the Formation and Development of National Languages)," M.M. Guxman, Moscow, 1960. (amm)

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PRELIMINARY TRANSLATIONS OF SELECTED WORKS IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS

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NUMBER II

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TRANSLATORS' COMMENT

The translations included in the present series are preliminary in the following respects. A relatively close rendition of the original wording has been aimed at, and only a few of the more conspicuous problems of style were dealt with. Although each translation was checked by one or more of the cooperating translators, further careful editing and checking is required. An attempt was made to provide consistent translations of the recurring linguistic terminology. Some of the translated terms are provisional: the term "variety", for example, does not necessarily imply recent American definitions of this term. Wherever possible, the advice of subject specialists was sought in connection with particular languages discussed in the translated studies. However, more detailed editing by language specialists is advisable -- including, in some cases, editorial notes on debatable views and descriptions.

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THE PROBLEM OF LITERARY LANGUAGE AND DIALECT IN ARAB COUNTRIES

by V. M. Belkin

[Guxman, Voprosy..., pp. 158-174. Translated by Kathleen Lewis, Center for Applied Linguistics.]

The liberation of the Arab countries from political and economic dependence has significantly broadened the sphere in which the national language is used. Arabic was almost completely excluded from science, technology, business, and other fields, where it was supplanted by the languages of the colonial powers (French and English). The low cultural level and the illiteracy of an overwhelming majority of the population was conducive to the isolation of different forms of the language, and in particular, the dichotomy between the literary and spoken varieties. The essence of the problem lies in the fact that the literary language is primarily a written language, which is not used in everyday communication. This function is fulfilled by local dialects, whose standards are far from those of the literary language. The literary language is not transmitted from generation to generation, as is the case with the dialects, but requires many years of study in school. For this reason, much is written and said about the necessity of solving the "contradiction" between the literary language and the dialects, bringing them closer together, and eliminating "bilingualism".

In this connection, the critical question is raised about changing the method of teaching the Arabic literary language in Arab schools; until now it has been taught, essentially, according to a system devised

in the medieval schools of Basra and Kûfa more than a thousand years ago.

With the success of the national liberation movement, a question has arisen about how the Arabic literary language should respond to the needs of contemporary life in all its ramifications, and a desire has been felt to rid the language of archaic elements, especially in the field of grammar. Finding ways to expand the vocabulary with new scientific and technical terms is also highly important.

Consideration has frequently, but inconclusively, been given to the question of improving the writing system (to make reading easier - in ordinary Arabic script, short vowels are not represented) or even completely reforming it (for example, changing to the Roman alphabet).

These problems can only be solved correctly by taking into account the social and economic problems which have become urgent in the Arab countries; in addition, the character of the language and its history must be considered.

1

There is no reliable information about the initial period in the history of the Arabic literary language. The earliest examples of pre-Islamic poetry were recorded as late as the eighth and ninth centuries, that is, two or three centuries after their appearance (for this reason doubts are sometimes expressed about their complete authenticity with respect to the ancient forms). They testify to a fully developed language with an extensive history.

For this reason, the question of how the Arabic literary language became established in its "classic" form (i. e., the Arabic of the ancient

pre-Muslim poetry which has come down to us, and also of the Koran of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh centuries A.D.) is not sufficiently clear. There is reliable evidence of the existence of a number of important tribal dialects in pre-Muslim Arabia, along with a literary language common to all tribes. However, the opinions advanced to this date concerning the relation between ancient Arabic dialects and the classical Arabic language are merely "guesses and working hypotheses".[1] No single, commonly accepted opinion exists. The reason for this is the scarcity and fragmentary nature of the information which has come down to us about the dialects of ancient Arabia. The sources for this information are the numerous works of the medieval Arab philologists and historians, where one finds data concerning the deviation of tribal speech from the generally accepted literary and poetic standard.[2] The Arab philologists, who considered the dialects to be the result of a decline in the "talent for language" and the loss of the talent for "eloquence", influenced by the mingling of Arabs with other tribes and peoples, concentrated their efforts on comprehensive study and the establishment of rules for the language only in its classic form. However, individual comments are found in their works concerning the dialect peculiarities in the speech of the different tribes. The analysis of these works at the level which is of interest to us was begun only comparatively recently, however, and naturally such uncoordinated data cannot give a sufficiently clear picture of the state of tribal dialects in Arabia in the sixth century. T. Nöldeke has suggested that the difference between the dialects was very insignificant and that the classical language contained elements from all the dialects of the western, central, and eastern parts of Arabia. This opinion coincided almost exactly with that of Guidi, who considered Classical

Arabic a blend of dialects from the Nejd (Central Arabia) and adjacent regions, and not identical to any one of the dialects then existing. A similar view is held by Vollers, who maintained the hypothesis that Classical Arabic was based on the speech of the Bedouins of the Nejd and Yemen, but was greatly altered by the poets.

C. Brockelmann wrote that no one in Ancient Arabia spoke the classical language in its known form. Thus, these and various other European Arabists maintain that the ancient poets must have had to study the classical language. C. Rabin in his book "Ancient West-Arabian", speaking about the existence of two major dialect groups - the eastern and western (which are sometimes called 'Bedouin' and 'sedentary', or the Ḥijāz and Tamīm groups), - thinks that the language of ancient poetry might have been formed in the border zone between these groups, where the individual features of the eastern and western dialects mingled and became equalized, and where it was possible for a compromise to occur between them. Phonetically, Classical Arabic is closer to the western Arabic dialect; grammatically, to the eastern Arabic.[3]

Some European scholars think that the ancestor of Classical Arabic was one of the tribal dialects, in which case the tribe either is named (the Maᶜadd in Nallino), or is not named (Fischer, Hartmann). The idea is very popular (especially in national Arab philology) of an association between Arabic in its classical form and the dialect of the Quraysh tribe, who lived in Mecca, and consequently the classical language was not infrequently called the Qurayshi or Mecca language.[4] However, this conception, arising obviously from the recognition of the city's leading role in the commercial, political, and religious life of the Arabs in the period before

Islam and during its formation, finds less and less support in the light of new data. It is assumed that the role which the Quraysh played in the formation of the literary language in the pre-Muslim epoch was not a major one.

The formation of the single inter-tribal literary language of pre-Islamic poetry, given the particularism of the tribes, their preference for their own people to strangers, and also the repeated references of philologists of the end of the eighth century and later to their trips into the desert to visit the Bedouins (especially the tribes of Qays, Tamīm and Asad) with the aim of studying the "correct", "uncorrupted" Arabic, serve as strong confirmation of the insignificance of dialect distinctions in the language of the tribes of the northern half of the Arabian peninsula. Two forms of a single Arabic language (at that time both oral and unwritten) - literary and dialect - were distinct only in details, but not in essence, and were not sharply opposed to each other. It is obvious that these dialects can be safely called the spoken form of the classical language.

The second quarter of the seventh century A.D. was a turning point in Arab history: the Arabs began their aggressive campaigns abroad, and as a result, the mass migration of the Arab people far beyond the borders of the peninsula began. These events were also the most important factor in the entire history of Arabic. Arabic entered the conquered countries in two forms: in the literary form - as the language of administration, as the language of the new religious ideology (Islam), as the language of poetry and partly as the language of the ruling segments of the population; and in its dialect form - as the daily spoken language of the conquerers. However the subsequent development of these two closely connected forms of the language did not coincide with the limits of their distribution. By

the eighth century, Classical Arabic was firmly established in many countries of Western Asia, North Africa, and Europe (the Pyrenean peninsula). One of the principal reasons for its distribution in these countries is usually considered to be the circumstance that Arabic was felt to be an inseparable part of Muslim dogma (in this period religious ideology permeated every aspect of the life of the society). As a result, it became the international language of learning as well, uniting the scholars of the entire Muslim world. But its distribution and subsequent fate cannot be exclusively connected with a single literary monument - the Koran. The introduction of Arabic as the administrative language in the conquered countries, as well as other historic and social factors associated with the conquest, in particular the general position of these countries on the eve of the Arab conquest, was highly significant. It is impossible to ignore also the character of Arabic itself, its capacity for precisely expressing and [also] subtly modifying the various new scientific concepts. It was in the very field of scientific literature that Arabic very soon replaced Aramaic, which had been until then the international language of learning in the Middle East. Later, even the Shu^{c}ubiya, who had preached the equality of non-Arabs and Arabs, were not able to diminish the importance of Arabic (to be more exact, they did not want to, because they were themselves Muslims). When the ethnically pure Arabic element began to assume second place after the Abbasside's rise to power, work was begun to strengthen the rules of Arabic, which was later explained as an effort to preserve it from distortion.

The Arabic language, spreading from military camps and other places where the tribes settled, began by degrees to crowd out the living spoken languages, which had earlier successfully resisted the encroachments of

Latin, Greek, and Persian. The Egyptians stopped using Coptic, the Syrians and Mesopotamians stopped using Aramaic, and even the Spanish Christians began using Arabic extensively, etc. But the limits of distribution of the living, spoken language did not coincide with the limits of distribution of the written language. The boundaries of the latter were much wider. In many areas, Arabic served only the needs of science and administration; the conquerers themselves were quickly assimilated with the local people and adopted their language. And so, by the ninth century, it was impossible to distinguish Arabs who had settled in certain areas of Khurāsān from the original population on the basis of language.[5]

Throughout the many centuries of its written history, Arabic underwent extensive development. Its departure from the classical form as a whole began to be noticeable by the eighth century, in the translations of Ibn al-Muqaffa^{c} (d. 757). The broadening of the sphere of the language's use and the appearance of new genres in literature led to a different selection of linguistic resources, aimed at simplification and clarity in the exposition of thought. The most noticeable changes occurred in the lexicon. Vocabulary changes and is inevitably renewed from epoch to epoch as a consequence of the social changes in the material and spiritual conditions in the life of the society. In the Arabic of the sixth century, the terminology of science, agriculture, and the crafts was still insufficiently refined. However, even then the process of borrowing words from the languages of neighboring peoples had begun. Thus, a significant number of Persian and Greek words came into Arabic by way of the northern Arabian principalities, and also the foreign colonies. The "arabicization" of foreign vocabulary became much more intensive during

later periods. Suyūṭī (1445-1505) counted about a hundred foreign words in the Koran, borrowed from Persian, Greek, Ethiopian, Aramaic, Hebrew, the Coptic-Latin languages, and Sanskrit. At the same time the language lost lexical items, referring to phenomena which had disappeared from the life of the Arabs.

Beginning in the second half of the seventh century, Arabian society began to change "from a blood community to a language community".[6] The resultant rise in the level of the culture produced a new and strong impulse to expand the Arabic vocabulary with foreign words and phrases. The active period of translation at the beginning of the Abbasside caliphate and the rise of a new synthetic Arabic culture resulted in many hundreds of new foreign terms entering the Arabic language. This process did not stop even in the period of decline, when the influence of Turkish, Italian, and French lexical items was felt. Even foreign language phraseology was reproduced. Borrowing was not the only source for vocabulary expansion. There was widespread utilization of the word-forming possibilities of Arabic, with both indigenous Arabic material and material previously "arabicized" being treated as productive stems. The leading role, however, in vocabulary development, belonged to the different semantic changes (the condensation and expansion of meanings, or their blending). All the processes indicated show that at every stage of its history, Arabic, in its lexical makeup, has met the needs of the time, and that beside the vocabulary common to the whole written history of the language, one can also distinguish vocabulary items characteristic only of classical or only of the contemporary period of the development of the language.

The semantic changes were of an even more generalized character.

Inspection of the verbal stock of Arabic shows that the contemporary language has not only eliminated from its vocabulary the numerous verbs with obsolete meanings; a vast majority of verbs designating actions connected with desert life, the various ways of riding a camel, and so forth, have either dropped out or become restricted to Bedouin dialects. So also have whole semantic groups (for example, causative stems of the type ʾaf^{c}ala with the meaning "approach of the time for completion of an action designated by the root", and others). Many of these semantic groups, belonging to different verb types, are represented in the modern vocabulary only by isolated units.[7] On the other hand, other groups (especially of the types fa ^{cc}ala, fā^{c}ala and tafā^{c}ala) are very actively expanding their stock with new formations and are broadening their semantic range (compare the change from the meaning of gradual action to that of the sequence of action in the meanings of the stems of the tafā^{c}ala type). The system of noun formation has changed also. On the whole, here polysemy is giving way to monosemy, but the number of types is diminishing (up to 300 derivative types of stems for triliteral roots can be counted in Sībawayhi).

In Arabic syntax a complex system of subordinate links is developing, which makes it possible to express the finest shades of meaning.

The "vagueness" of Arabic speech, the result of too frequently replacing nouns with pronouns, has been replaced by clarity and precision.

On the other hand, the formal morphological and syntactic resources of the language remain, throughout its entire written history, absolutely unchanged, which not infrequently gives rise to remarks about the inflexibility and stagnation of Arabic and its lack of change since pre-Islamic times. The changes have thus affected only its lexico-semantic and stylistic-

syntactic aspects.

On the basis of these facts, the written history of the Arabic literary language can be divided into three stages: the classical language (the language of pre-Islamic poetry and the poetry of the first centuries after Islam, the language of the Koran), the Arabic literary language (the standard form used as an international literary language in the medieval East) and the contemporary Arabic literary language.

Arabic as a means of oral communication spread in the newly conquered areas more slowly than the literary language. In a number of instances, it met fierce opposition from the old languages. Thus, up to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in the mountains of Lebanon and northern and eastern Iraq, Aramaic was used, and in Upper Egypt, Coptic. Western and eastern Aramaic dialects in forms quite removed from the Aramaic language are preserved here and there even today.

Large numbers of Arabs and "arabicized" people for many centuries scarcely used their literary language. The overwhelming majority of the people were illiterate and remote from the culture and learning of their time. Under these circumstances, the local dialects were actually the only means of daily communication. The limited numbers of people associated with the literary language lived apart from the masses and were not in a position to somehow link the development of the two forms of a single Arabic language. The nature of medieval Arabic literature itself led the Arabic literary language away from questions of everyday life, which merely favored the further development of the dialects. J. Fück thinks a complete

separation of the written and oral languages existed in the tenth century.

The subsequent separate development of the two variants of the language - the spoken (represented by a number of dialects) and the written (or literary language) - led to their ultimate divergence. The activity of the Arab philologists in composing grammatical codes and dictionaries had great importance in fixing the rules for Arabic (it is considered that the reason for this was their desire to preserve the Koran from the "distortions" which had appeared under the influence of changes in Arabic). Later on their opinions became dogma, and the period of decadence which lasted for many centuries actually brought the development of the literary language to a complete standstill until the nineteenth century. Colloquial spoken Arabic in fact existed only in dialect forms, in which different types of popular literature appeared.

There are still no scientific data about the development of Arab dialects in the Muslim period. It is obvious that Arabic speech, as the result of its distribution over a wide, previously non-Arabic area, underwent the most diverse influences. The adoption of Arabic by non-Arabs led to changes in phonetics, morphology, and syntax. Particular difficulty was experienced in the articulation of unfamiliar emphatics and interdental sounds. Arabs philologists comment frequently on the confusion in the system of noun declensions, etc. Information about Arabic colloquial speech after the eighth century is available also in some Christian and European manuscripts which have been preserved, whose authors were unfamiliar with Muslim culture and, because they did not know much about the literary language, wrote in the "al-luġa ad-dārīǰa " (colloquial language) of their time. Here the laryngeal stop (hamza) is consistently omitted, and the

emphatics ḍ and ṣ, which were difficult to pronounce, were equated with z and s. Especially characteristic is the omission of ʾiʿrāb (final unstressed grammatical inflections, indicating a connection between the word and other words and defining the functions of words in the sentence)[8], which led to stricter word order in the sentence (subject, predicate, object) and to regular complete agreement of subject and predicate in number. Other characteristic phenomena are the failure to drop the -n^{i} and -n^{a} of the dual and the sound plural of nouns in the iḍāfa, and the replacement of many relative pronouns by a single one (illī), which is also characteristic of Arabic dialects today.

Contemporary Arabic dialects were partly the further continuation and development of ancient Arabic dialects, with which they have a number of features in common, as has been indicated in recent works on Arabic dialectology. For example, the replacement of the hamza by the ʿayn among the Bedouins of Upper Egypt in analogous cases coincides with a peculiarity of the dialect of the Tamīm tribe. The pronunciation of the affix for feminine nouns, -at, by part of the population of Syria and Iraq, can be traced to the Yemeni dialect. Vocalization of personal prefixes of the verb in the present-future tense by the vowel i in many contemporary Arabic dialects, was characteristic of one of the dialects of the Quḍāʿa tribe. The dropping of word endings, which in some cases occurs in a number of dialects of Lower Egypt, was charactertic of the Ṭayy dialect and others.

The geographical factor played an important role in the formation of Arabic territorial dialects. The population was concentrated only in separate areas, isolated from each other by vast, unpopulated deserts and therefore contacts between the different groups were very weak. The

weakness of centralized rule in the enormous Arab language state taking shape and its subsequent breakdown shortly after into a large number of dependent and semi-independent countries, also facilitated the isolation of dialects. Of course, other factors and regularities characteristic of oral speech in general, as opposed to written, must be taken into consideration.

At the present time, five major dialect groups can be distinguished: Arabian (this includes the Nejd, Ḥidjāz and Yemen), Syrian (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine, within the old borders), Iraqi (Iraq), Egyptian (Egypt and the Sudan) and Maghribi (Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco), all of these united by certain common features. Each of these is divided into a number of dialects and sub-dialects with greater or lesser differences between them. And in their turn, out of the great mass of Arab dialects, the dialects of the sedentary population (city and rural) and the dialects of the nomadic Bedouins are distinct from each other.

All of these dialects and sub-dialects are far removed from the literary language. The most noticeable differences between the literary language and the dialects are phonetic. The vowel system has expanded, there are five basic short vowels in the dialects (a, u, i, e, o) and five corresponding long vowel phonemes instead of the three (a, u, i) in the literary language. The short vowels (especially a, e, i or u and o) frequently replace each other, and in one and the same Egyptian village one can hear al-gamal, el-gemel or il-gemel, 'camel'.[9]

The situation is different with the consonants - their different features of pronunciation were caused by dialect distinctions. Thus, Syrian ž (žabal) corresponds to the literary ǰ (ǰabal 'mountain'),

as does Egyptian g (gabal); Syrian and Egyptian t (taman) correspond to literary t̲ (t̲aman 'price'); the literary d̲ (d̲ahab 'gold') usually has as its counterpart d (dahab), rarely z (zanb 'wine' is the same as lit. d̲anb); literary q (qabla 'until') is often dialect ', (hamza) ('abl), or g (gabl), etc.[10] Moreover in the Syrian dialects (sedentary), the most important features are, in phonetics, the voiceless pronunciation of q, change of the interdental spirants t̲ and d̲ to dental stops t and d (they are preserved in the dialect of the eastern Bedouins); weakening of h almost to the point of complete inaudibility in the bound affixes -ha and -hum (-hon), which are suffixed to words ending in a consonant (h is not weakened in the dialect of the nomads).[11] [Some scholars of Arabic also take into consideration the "reflexes" of lit. ḍ (ض) and ẓ (ظ), which in general distinguish Bedouin from sedentary speech. The reflexes of lit. q (ق) also have this diagnostic function. - Ed.]

A significant role in the formation of dialect distinctions has been played by the shift of stress (compare Egyptian and Syrian 'anta with Maghribi antá>nta). Here the loss of unstressed endings indicating grammatical inflections, which has caused a shift in syntax from the synthetic to the analytic, and has also facilitated the reduction of long final vowels to short in grammatical inflections (Egyptian ḍarabu instead of lit. ḍarabū 'they beat') deserves mention. All final long vowels (Egyptian rama instead of lit. ramā 'throw') undergo an analogous change. The reduction of diphthongs is a feature of some of the dialects (bayt 'house'>bēt, yawm 'day' >yōm).[12] New pronunciations of nouns which destroy the former syllable structure are frequently noticed (this is apparently the result of the loss of case endings, as the dialect rasim

and Masir correspond to the literary rasm 'drawing' and Miṣr 'Egypt'). This is true of verbs also (Egyptian ḫiliṣ or ḫuluṣ corresponds to literary ḫalaṣa 'to be pure'; Egyptian ᶜitir or ᶜutur corresponds to literary ᶜaṯara 'to stumble'; and Egyptian yiḍráb corresponds to literary yaḍrib 'he beats').

Lexical items of the purely dialect, everyday type, along with the borrowings from language substrata, have come into the stock of Arabic root-words as a result of the action of certain phonetic regularities, as for example: transposition of root consonants (Egyptian gōz - with diphthong reduction - is the same as Classical zawǰ 'pair'); dissimilation [of consonants] which have undergone reduplication in the formation of "quadriliteral" roots (lit. nazzala 'to settle' - Lebanese nayzal)[13]; nasalization of labials (lit. tabahtara 'to put on airs' - Egyptian itmahtar); the devoicing of voiced sounds (lit. šaḥaḏa 'to beg' - Egyptian šaḥad > šaḥat) or the voicing of voiceless sounds (lit. ḫafīr - Egyptian ġafīr 'guard') and so on. Such regularities were to a great extent inherent historically in the literary language also, but their further development was stopped by the formulation of written rules for the language by philologists, after which further changes in the root words began to be considered incorrect.

The simplification of the system of verb conjugation and the reduction in the number of pronouns and pronominal affixes from 14 to 8 is characteristic of the changes in morphology; so also is the reduction in the number of relative pronouns (to one), as well as demonstratives, and the complete non-productivity of causative verbs of the type ʾafᶜala and others.

Of the changes in syntax, the most important are the loss, already mentioned, of final inflections indicating the functions of words in sentences; the frequent use of active participles with objects; the introduction of an auxiliary word meaning possession (Egyptian betā^{c}; Algerian and Tunisian tā^{c}, intā^{c}: Syrian taba^{c}, Iraqi māl); the complete agreement (noticeable in the dialects) of the subject and verbal predicate in number regardless of their relative position; and the unlinked conjunction of verbs, etc.

Such, in general, are some of the principal features of a number of major Arabic dialects. Within each dialect group, more minor dialects and sub-dialects with a number of specific features can be distinguished. For example, the dialect of the Tripoli-Damascus region is distinguished from other Syrian dialects and sub-dialects by the voiceless pronunciation of q; by the weakening or complete loss of h in the pronominal affixes -ha and -hon: by the absence of special forms for the feminine plural of personal pronouns and of verbs; by the introduction from Aramaic of the pronominal suffix -kon for the second person plural, the personal pronoun henne and the pronominal affix -hon for the third person plural.[14]

City speech is characteristically distinguished from the speech of surrounding rural areas by the replacement of the old velar q by the laryngeal stop (hamza) or even the vowel a, while at the same time in the rural speech of Syria it remains approximately unchanged or, if fronting occurs, changes to a palatal k or even i (in Palestine).[15]

Phonetic differences in the speech of the sedentary population and the nomadic Bedouins were mentioned previously. With respect to morphology, it is worth mentioning that, in the dialects of sedentary

people, gender is not distinguished in personal pronouns and verbs in the second and third persons plural, while in nomadic dialect both gender forms have been preserved. In syntax, nouns are joined to nouns or to pronominal affixes directly in the dialect of the nomadic Arabs, but sedentary Arabs regularly introduce a special conjunctive particle (taba^{c}). In vocabulary, the use of diminutive nouns is characteristic of the sedentary dialects.[16]

Despite the divergence between the five dialect groups, speakers of any one of them can, with some difficulty, understand a conversation conducted in the dialect of another group, because of the identity of a large part of the vocabulary and the basic facts of grammar.[17] It is thought that the speech of the Bedouin nomads and after that the speech of the rural people are closest to the literary language at the phonetic, lexical and syntactic levels. Of the major dialect groups, northern Arabic and Egyptian are closest to it. In the Iraqi, Syrian, and Maghribi dialects, the considerable influence of their language predecessors - Aramaic and Berber - is felt.

3

The presence of two forms of the language - the literary (al-luġa al-fuṣḥa) and the spoken (al-luġa al-^{c}ammiyya or al-luġa ad-dārīǰa), represented by a number of dialects (al-lahǰāt), with different phonetic, morphological and syntactic norms, has been the object of lively discussion in the Arab countries in the last few decades. The almost complete elimination of the literary language from the area of oral communication and the almost unlimited domination of this area by the dialects has provoked a natural desire to find some way for a genuine unification

of these two language forms. However, this question has often been considered by the Arab press to be purely a linguistic one, divorced from the economic, historical and social problems of the Arab countries. Proceeding only from the fact of the existence of "bilingualism", the two forms of the language have been considered in this case to be antagonistic. It was thought possible to achieve unity of the written and oral forms of the language by one of two ways: either by widespread introduction of the literary language, so that all Arabic speaking peoples would speak the literary language, or by converting the dialects into literary languages. In both cases a great economy in time spent studying would have been achieved. The opinion has also been expressed occasionally that the second solution would lead to the faster elimination of illiteracy and increase in the general cultural level of the people.

Opponents of the second point of view have justifiably declared, that such a solution of the problem would hinder the unity of the Arab peoples, would destroy one of the most important foundations of their common centuries-old culture and would break the link with their historic heritage. And this would scarcely facilitate the spread of knowledge: "Does the author of the Foreword (Sa^{c}Īd ^{c}Aql, who examined questions of esthetics in the Foreword to the collection of poems 'Zhulnār', of the Lebanese poet Michel Ṭarrād, written in dialect. - V. B.) really think that the mere adoption of the colloquial language for the examination of philosophical questions would make them accessible to all people? I am convinced that simple people will not understand philosophical abstractions even in the colloquial, because the themes treated are difficult to

comprehend...".[18] Ṭāhā Ḥusayn writes "The people who advocate replacing the literary language with the dialects in view of the difficulty of the former and the easiness of the latter are like those who advocate the spread of ignorance because it is easy, and the liquidation of the sciences because they are hard".[19]

Statements are made to the effect that, even if in Egypt, for example, one of the main dialects were adopted as the basis for a new literary language, complete language unity would still not be achieved, as long as the dialects of Upper and Lower Egypt differ from each other so greatly.

The first way seems ideal to many, but practically unrealizable because of the impossibility of prescribing to people the form of oral speech and forcing them to speak just as "the pre-Muslim Bedouins spoke more than a thousand years ago, in the language of Sībawayhi and Jāḥiẓ". It should be mentioned that at the present time fewer and fewer statements are made in favor of abandoning the literary language in favor of the dialects. Most are of the opinion that the solution of the problem depends on time and that the rift between the written and spoken forms of the language will gradually become narrower with the disappearance of illiteracy, the spread of education among the broad masses of the people and the general rise in the level of culture.

The significance of this discussion lies in the fact that it has set the stage for serious consideration of the current status of the Arabic literary language, or more precisely, has facilitated the correct understanding of the nature and function of the literary language and dialects, has shown the necessity of rejecting the traditional view of

language and has indicated the concrete problems of the literary language and the necessity for solving them quickly.

Most of the authors writing in the Arab press on questions of the literary and colloquial languages, agree that the literary language does not fully meet the needs of the time, that it is not keeping pace with current progress, that it is unwieldy. In the words of the well-known Egyptian writer Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, many young people think and say that the literary language has ceased to meet the needs of contemporary life, that the spoken language is easier and more flexible, closer to life, more faithfully expresses its process, more clearly reflects thoughts, feelings, and desires and does not require special efforts in the process of speech.[20]

A. Frayḥa, who has more than once spoken in favor of the simplification of Arabic grammar and writing (for which he has been nicknamed the "dialect champion" and the "destroyer of Arabic"[21]), says this of the literary language: "Being in official situations, in the classroom, the university auditorium and on the radio...,we are forced to speak in a language alienated from life, difficult, inflected, rigidly limited in its rules and syntactic constructions... We are forced to speak in official situations in the language of past generations, to express our feelings and inner experiences in a language which was halted in its development at a specific stage, when it was surrounded by an aura of sanctity and when a wall of immovable opinions had been built around it...".[22] K. Y. al-Ḥājj, who often disagrees with Frayḥa, agrees with him here. He declares that "the demand for a simplification of the literary language, so that it can keep up with the needs of the twentieth century, is right. Our literary

language must differ from the language of Zamakhshari... We are convinced that no one will cling to the language of Zamakhshari".[23] More and more demands are made for the simplification of the literary language, for making the rules of Arabic grammar easier, and for restoration of an unbroken link between the two forms of the single language. For example, Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm, the contemporary Egyptian writer, thinks that it is necessary to make use of what is best in the spoken language, so that the literary language may thereby be nourished, and strengthened and reinforced. The spoken language represents the vital forces of the present, while the literary language represents the genius of the past. Every phenomenon of human life, including language, must combine the past and the present, with an eye to the future.[24] The problems of Arabic must be solved boldly, but it is necessary to get away from the nature of language itself and not just replace one form with another. Although many important changes have taken place in Arabic in its many centuries of written history, it is still felt necessary to reexamine a number of its grammatical rules, in order to give it the properties of greater flexibility and simplicity. For the present, these demands actually amount mainly to legislative "abolition of the rules of ʾiʿrab and nunation" (which, properly speaking, takes place in the spoken form of the literary language), in order to make the Arabic literary language "like every one of the Arab dialects".[25] However such statements so far have had no effect. What is usually meant by making Arabic grammar easier and simpler is not reconsidering a number of its grammatical rules with the aim of bringing literary and spoken norms closer to each other, but recognizing the necessity for eliminating from the schools the study of a number of grammatical peculiarities, which

have lost their importance for the living literary language (for example, in the realm of "verbal government"), and giving only the material which is necessary for learning to read and write well and acquire a taste for good literary Arabic. At the same time, the need has become urgent for a grammatical analysis at the level of achievement of contemporary linguistics. For this purpose, there must be a review of the segmentation of linguistic material into parts of speech and members of the sentence[26] and the introduction of more precise grammatical terminology, which will accurately reflect the essence of the linguistic phenomena. The first real step in this direction was the recommendations of the Egyptian Ministry of Education, which were considered at the congress of the Academy of Arabic in Damascus in October of 1956. It was decided, however, that these suggestions needed to be studied at greater length.

The problem of Arabic scientific and technical terminology is particularly acute. Complaints are frequently found in the Arab press to the effect that Arabic today is more and more unable to meet the terminology needs of contemporary science and technology. The most important ways of replenishing the lexicon are borrowing and word formation. Until recently, the point of view existed that the "arabicization" of words, that is, borrowing foreign lexical items and altering their shape along the lines of Arabic word formation, was the concern only of the "pure Arabs", who lived until the second century after the Hegira in the cities and until the fourth century after the Hegira in the desert. The proponents of this viewpoint, the orthodox Muslim circles of al-Azhar and the members of the Academy of Arabic in Cairo, who have joined them, insisted even recently that loan words not be entered in the

vocabulary, because this would spoil the "purity" of Arabic. They demanded the use of Arabic ma'ih instead of the foreign hīdrūǰin 'hydrogen', miḥarr instead of ūksīǰīn 'oxygen', ǰammār instead of taram 'streetcar', sarīm instead of banzīn 'gasoline', kazīma instead of tarmus 'thermos' and nāmūs instead of sikritir 'secretary'. Although their efforts have helped somewhat to increase the vocabulary, most of their newly invented terms are stuck in the Academy "decrees" and are not used in actual practice. The failure to create Arabic scientific terminology is explained by the fact that efforts to solve the question were made without taking usage into account, and that efforts were made to impose artificially created terms instead of gathering and recording those already used in the vocabulary.

One particular reaction to these views was a movement among intellectuals, whose spokesmen wanted to replace Arabic script with the Roman alphabet, which in addition to simplifying reading, would facilitate the widespread borrowing of scientific and technical terms from Western European languages (in Arabic script, terms that are complex and little-known are very difficult to identify even with a great deal of practice in reading). At the present time, such a solution of the problem is not being considered.

The most important and effective means of expanding the Arabic vocabulary are still word formation according to certain morphological types, borrowing from foreign vocabularies, and various semantic shifts in the present vocabulary. Recently, it was suggested that complex terms be copied by loan translation, using a method which is called "naḥt" 'carving' in Arabic linguistics. This is an indigenous way of

composing words by forming new productive roots from the components of productive roots: for example barmā'iyy 'amphibious' from barr 'land, earth' and mā' 'water' (with the addition of the relative affix -iyy) or taḥturba 'subsoil, depths' (Fr. sous-sol) from taḥta 'under' and turba 'soil, earth', or even luba'raz 'cedar of Lebanon' from 'arz 'cedar' and Lubnān 'Lebanon'[27] etc.

However the productive formation of new terms in this way is questionable and inadvisable in view of the loss of any recognizable etymological connection between the newly formed terms and their derivational bases. By way of comparison, for nītrāt aṣ-ṣūdium 'sodium carbonate', consisting of nītrūgīn 'nitrogen' + ūksīǰīn 'oxygen' + sūdium 'sodium', nut'akṣad or natṣadāt, or nata'ṣad or nataksad are suggested; for the concept 'four-legged': 'arbayd from 'arba' [sic] 'four' and yad 'leg (of an animal)'.[28] But these ways of forming words, which really represent root-formation, are non-productive (Arab philologists have counted about 60 such formations in the vocabulary[29]). The intention here is obviously to follow the system of languages with completely different laws.

The terminological crisis in the Arab countries has arisen, not as the result of the failure of an Arabic, unable to follow the path of current progress, or because of the desire of conservative linguists to oppose new phenomena in the language, because it is not possible to interfere with its development. "The power of the governments of all the Arab countries is not able to eliminate the word talfana 'to talk on the telephone' and replace it with the word hatafa. The will of the nation is greater than the will of the government, and the will of

the people is greater than that of the government. The nation has opened the door for the word talfana and the loan word has become a native".[30] The crisis in terms was the result of the many centuries of decline, when intellectual activity was fundamentally restricted by compiling a repetition of past scholarly achievements. During the period of colonial rule, the opinion was widespread that Arabic could not become a means of mastering scientific knowledge. In the Arab-speaking countries the languages of the colonial powers were firmly established and had replaced the national language in the schools, the higher educational institutions and in the sphere of commercial relations. The achievement of independence gives full scope to the national language and experience shows that the introduction of new weapons, machines and instruments, etc. does not leave them unnamed - whether the terms for them are Arabic or borrowed.

The growth of mutual ties andcollaboration between Arab countries, the movement of people between the city and the village as well as between different countries, is leading to significant changes in the local dialects: the dialects of the major cities are influencing the smaller dialects and ways of speech. At the same time, the language of the majority of the population has begun to level and to develop under the influence of the spread of education, books, the press, and the radio. Thus, "...the city dialect of Omdurman (the Sudan), free of purely tribal and local features and sympathetic to outside influences, both literary and political, is becoming recognized more and more as the common form of the spoken language and the means of communication between the people of the cities. The rural inhabitants, constituting the majority of the population, naturally, always use their own dialects; the speech of

Omdurman, which is close to being a "common language" now, is used by tribal leaders and others who are in contact with a wider world".[31] These processes are visible in countries like Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. Evidence is available that in the last thirty to sixty years, some dialects on the whole have become somewhat closer to the language of the newspapers and books than they were before. Among educated people a common spoken Arabic is forming, whose principal source is the literary language (it is distinguished from the latter by a number of features: the omission of ʾiʿrāb, the simplification of the system of verb conjugation, the smaller number of personal pronouns, etc.). However the immediate disappearance of the dialects is impossible: "The problems which have arisen lately in connection with bilingualism in our Arab society, will change as our life itself changes. This will happen when the Arab people themselves direct their affairs, achieve complete independence, and completely free themselves from the yoke of imperialism, from its visible and concealed influence in all areas of our life. Then they can restore their ties with their national cultural heritage, recorded earlier in literary Arabic. This will occur when the darkness and illiteracy of the masses is eliminated, when the cultural level of the people is raised and the national culture is strengthened throughout all the Arab countries. It is then that these national cultures will be able to show the abilities and energy hidden in our people".[32]

The problem of the literary language and dialect as a whole, the problems of the literary language and the fundamental solution of these problems go hand in hand with the solution of the basic economic and social problems of the Arab world. At the same time there are a number

of concrete problems: methods of teaching Arabic in the schools, its simplification, certain problems connected with terminology, etc. - which can be solved at the present time.

[FOOTNOTES]

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1. C. Rabin. Ancient West-Arabian. London, 1951, p. 17.

2. Of these, the following are frequently mentioned: kaškaša of the Asad and Rabīᶜa tribes (shift of k with following i to š in the pronominal affix for 2nd person, fem. sing.); ᶜanᶜana of the Tamīm and Qays tribes (initial hamza becomes ᶜayn); faḥfaḥa of the Huzayl tribe (ḥ replacesᶜayn); ᶜaǰᶜaǰa of the Qudāᶜa tribe (final i becomes ǰ); taltala of the Bahrā' tribe (the vowel a in the prefix ta - 2nd person, pres.-fut. tense - replaces the vowel i); tarḥīm or quṭᶜa of the Ṭayy tribe (omission of the final unstressed consonant), etc.

3. C. Rabin. Ancient West-Arabian, p. 7. It is significant that almost all of the Arab poets of the sixth century came from eastern and central Arabia, and their poetry was the basic source used to establish the rules of the language later on.

4. In this connection, it is sometimes maintained that this dialect was prevalent even in the pre-Muslim period and that it had crowded out other dialects even in the sphere of oral communication. See Abd al-Wāḥid Wāfī. "Fiqh [sic] al-luġa [The Structure of the [Arabic] Language]". Cairo, 1956, pp. 108, 118.

5. The Arabs of Central Asia, whose dialects have been studied intensively in recent times by Soviet scholars, are not the direct descendants of the ancient conquerers. See: I. N. Vinnikov. Arabs in the

USSR. - "Sovetskaja etnografija" No. 4, 1940. S. I. Volin. History of the Arabs of Central Asia. - "Trudy II sessii Associacii arabistov". M.-L., 1941.

6. From the article "Anis al-Muqaddasī" in the journal "al-Hilāl", No. 2, 1955, p. 78. The comtemporary Arab linguist and philologist, al-Maġribī, writes that, of the 50 million Arabs living today, scarcely 10 million are ethnically pure Arabs. See his "Kitāb al-ištiqāq wa-t-ta'rib [Book of Etymology and Word Formation]", Cairo, 1947, p. 6.

7. Causatives of this type, although they are numerous in the contemporary literary language, are rarely augmented by new formations. In contemporary Arab dialects, they are almost completely replaced by causatives of the fa^{c}ala type.

8. J. Fück, in his work "Arabija" (Berlin, 1950), suggests that the 'i^{c}rāb existed in the spoken language of the Bedouins until the second and third centuries after the Hegira. A. Frayḫa, in his work "Naḥwa ^{c}arabiyya muyassara [Toward An Easy Arabic]" (Beirut, [n. d.], pp. 106 and 125) says, although he gives no evidence for this, that "the omission of 'i^{c}rāb from the speech of the people preceded the appearance of the Koran.

9. De Lacy O'Leary. Colloquial Arabic. London, 1955, p. 14.

10. At the same time, the consonants t, d, and ẓ have been replaced in some dialects of Iraq and the Maghrib (especially in Barqa), and among the tribes which came into Egypt from the Maghrib. The velar q

is also sometimes used in Iraq and Egypt, in the province of Banī Suēf, in the folktales of the people, which is evidence of its comparatively recent loss. See ᶜAbd ul-Wāḥid Wāfī, "Fiqh [sic] al-luġa [The Structure of the Language]". Cairo, 1956, p. 132.

11. J. Cantineau. Remarques sur les parlers de sédentaires syro-libano-palestiniens [Remarks on the Speech of the Sedentary Peoples of Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine]. "Bulletin de la Société de linguistique de Paris", v. 40, No. 118, 1939, p. 81.

12. In contrast to many Arab dialects, in the dialect of the city of Tripoli (in Lebanon), the old diphthong ay has become ā in open syllables, but remains in closed syllables (bāt 'house', but bayti 'my house'; ḥaṭ 'wall', but ḥayṭi 'my wall'), which is considered to be from the influence of Aramaic. See Hassan el-Hajje. Le parler arabe de Tripoli (Liban) [The Arabic Speech of Tripoli (Lebanon)]. Paris, 1954, p. 23.

13. This is a very productive method of verb formation. In the dialect of the village of Rās al-Matn (Lebanon) A. Frayḥa counted about a thousand such formations (including denominative verbs also). In the literary language, they are considered survivals. See Anis Khuri Frayḥa. Quadriliterals from the dialect of Rās al-Matn (Lebanon). Chicago, 1938, p. 3.

14. J. Cantineau in the foreword to "Le parler arabe de Tripoli [The Arabic Speech of Tripoli]".

15. J. Cantineau. Remarques..., pp. 83-85.

16. Ibid., p. 82.

17. ᶜAbd al-Wāḥid Wāfī. "Fiqh [sic] al-luġa [The Structure of the Language]", p. 144. However, he states (p. 145), that on a visit he made to Iraq, mutual understanding was possible only with educated people and only in the literary language.

18. Kamāl Yūsuf al-Ḥājj. "Falsafiyyāt [Philosophizings]". Beirut, 1956, p. 136.

19. See the journal "al-Jadīd". Ḥayfa, No. 9, 1955, p. 34.

20. See the journal "al-Adab'. Beirut, No. 11, 1956, pp. 2,3.

21. See the journal "aṣ-Ṣayyad". Beirut, No. 666, 1957, p. 22.

22. Anis Frayḥa. "Naḥwa ᶜarabiyya muyassara [Toward An Easy Arabic]", p. 18.

23. Kamāl Yūsuf al-Ḥājj. "Falsafat al-luġa [The Philosophy of Language]". Beirut, 1956, p. 260.

24. The journal "al-Jadīd". Ḥayfa, No. 9, 1955, p. 37.

25. The discussion of the problem of omitting final grammatical inflections has a long history. Even Abū ᶜĀlī al-Fārisi (900-987 A.D.) wrote: "As far as vowel inflection (ḥarakat 'al-'iᶜrāb) is concerned, there are contradictory opinions about the possibility of omitting it. There are people who maintain that it is impermissible to omit it,

because it is a sign of a change in inflection. Sībawayhi permits it in poetry ... . But those who insist that abolishing it is impossible, because it is a sign of inflection, are wrong, because vowel inflections sometimes are discarded. Aren't they discarded in the pause form (waqf) in defective nouns and verbs? ... If they say that vowel inflections indicate meanings and, if they were thrown out, the meaning would change, we reply that uninflected words also indicate meaning, even without inflections ...". Quoted in the journal "al-Hilāl", No. 2, 1955, p. 107.

26. A. Frayḥa, who has already been mentioned, suggests the following division into six parts of speech: pronouns (ḍamā'ir), verbs ('af^{c}āl), nouns ('asmā'), adjectives (ṣifāt), adverbs (ẓurūf) and particles ('adawāt). See his "Tabsīṭ qawā^{c}id al-^{c}arabiyya ... [Simplification of the Rules of Arabic]". Beirut, 1952, p. 24.

27. Muṣṭafā aš-Šahābī. "Al-muṣṭalaḥāt al-^{c}ilmiyya fi-l-luġa al-^{c}arabiyya ... [Scientific Terms in the Arabic Language ...]". [n. p.], 1955, p. 14.

28. See ^{c}Abdullah Amin. "Al-ištiqāq [Etymology]". Cairo, 1956, p. 443.

29. Ibid., p. 393.

30. K. Y. al-Ḥājj. "Falsafat al-luġa [The Philosophy of Language]", p. 282.

31. J. S. Trimingham. Sudan Colloquial Arabic. London, 1946, p. v.

32. Ḥusayn Muruwwa. "Qaḍāya 'adabiyya [Literary Questions]". Cairo, 1956, p. 48.